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FICO ASKS PASKA AND KALINAK TO COVER HIS BACK

1.(C) Slovakia's new Speaker of parliament, Pavol Paska, informed DCM that he had not wanted the job he is now in. Nor, he said, did fellow Smer party deputy chairman Robert Kalinak desire the Interior Minister slot. Kalinak had preferred to be Defense Minister. However, Prime Minister Robert Fico asked Paska and Kalinak to accept their current positions in order "to cover my back." Paska was given the herculean task of controlling Smer's coalition partners, the nationalist SNS and Vladimir Meciar's HZDS, in parliament. Kalinak's position is necessary to cover the governing coalition against the outrages of SNS party leader Jan Slota. Paska, though, worries more about the potential dealings of the unpredictable Meciar over Slota, who is considered to be all-talk-no-action.

ROMA PRESS CONFERENCE DRAWS A FULL HOUSE

[1](#)2. (U) Using an approach of active engagement, a group of pro-Roma NGOs is lobbying the new government to keep their constructive campaign promises to minorities and disadvantaged groups when drafting the government's program plan. The young Roma activists -- with assistance from trainers from the National Democratic Institute -- displayed a noteworthy level of political sophistication in their July 13th press conference, during which they also appealed to the public not to prejudice the current government nor to idealize the former government's actions on Roma issues. The group, spearheaded by the New Roma Generation and the Milan Simecka Foundation, offered their cooperation in finding ways to solve difficult problems within the Roma community. The event received widespread media attention. All Slovak TV stations, several radio stations, and other journalists covered the event. The Slovak all-news television station TA3 conducted an in-studio interview with Romani activist and political candidate Peter Pollak later that day.

[1](#)3. (U) In a live phone interview with TA3, the new Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights and Minorities Dusan Caplovic offered an open and inclusive relationship. He invited Romani NGOs to participate in finding solutions to the problems of the Roma communities. Caplovic is meeting with the Plenipotentiary for Roma Affairs, Klara Orgovanova, this week. He is tentatively scheduled to meet with the New Roma Generation and the Milan Simecka Foundation next week.

MP'S SON LEADS SKINHEAD GROUP - BUT WHICH MP?

[1](#)4. (C) According to a contact at the Ministry of Interior, the head of the skinhead movement in Slovakia is the son of a new Smer MP. The contact would not say which MP nor give the name of the son, but said that under his leadership the

skinhead movement in Slovakia has consolidated. Smer, the largest party in the Slovak Parliament, has 50 MPs. The MOI source says that the Ministry has penetrated the group, now based in Nitra about 55 miles east of Bratislava, and has "a man on the inside."

BENOVA: ANYONE WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER THAN SNS

15. (U) Tensions have been rising between PM Fico and Smer Deputy Chairwoman and representative to the European Parliament Monika Benova (her newly married name is Flasikova) as a result of the party's alliance with SNS. Since the formation of the coalition, Benova has been vehemently speaking out against Smer's decision to include SNS in the government. According to media reports, she says she cannot overlook the presence of the anti-minority SNS in the government, as her grandparents were Hungarians and her uncle had been in a concentration camp during World War II. A possible candidate for Foreign Minister prior to the election, Benova said this week that she would never accept a ministership under the current government. She fears that Fico's choice of coalition will only create enemies abroad, isolating Slovakia "as severely as Meciar had back in 1994." Benova disclosed to the daily Sme that the majority of Smer had, in fact, been against the current coalition, but now hers remains the sole voice of dissent within the party. Although other members of Smer, including Fico himself, have argued that a coalition with HZDS and SNS was the best choice, Benova believes that a coalition with HZDS and "any one of the parties from the former government" would have been better. Since Fico and Flasik (Benova's husband) had a falling-out last year, Benova has been outspoken and critical of Fico but has not left the party.

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GOVT FAILED TO DISTRIBUTE PROMISED FUNDS TO NGOS

16. (SBU) According to the NGO "Citizen and Democracy," the former GOS failed to distribute large portions of previously allocated EU and Slovak government funds to local NGOs. The funding program in question requires the GOS to match the EU funds evenly (ref B), although the NGOs suspect that the government inappropriately used a 70-30 formula in some cases. As little as 10 percent of the funds have been distributed, the NGO claims. The government should distribute the money on a reimbursement basis. The NGO community believes that the reason the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has been throwing up bureaucratic obstacles -- e.g., continually changing its paperwork requirements and even rejecting documents for incorrect punctuation -- was so that the government could keep the funds on the state budget books as long as possible. A number of approved projects have been in the implementation phase for over a year. The lack of reimbursement threatens the ability to maintain ongoing projects and has meant that some NGOs cannot pay their utility bills. A group of NGOs sent an open letter to several EU Commissioners to ask them to rectify the problem. The new government has not yet addressed the issue.

NAT'L MEMORY INST: LET'S COOPERATE BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

17. (SBU) A July 13th visit by a U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) representative to the Slovak Institute of National Memory (UPN) reinforced the deep level of cooperation between the two bodies, based on an agreement signed last February. The high degree of organization of UPN's archives and their willingness to share all their documents noticeably impressed the USHMM official. USHMM plans to supply a microfiche-ing camera and funds for technicians to UPN to enable digital document sharing. UPN staff feels a sense of urgency due to the unknown future of their organization. Because of the unexpected death last month of UPN Chairman Jan Langos, the Slovak Parliament will need to nominate and approve a new Chairman. UPN staff is concerned that party politics and a desire to keep the pasts

of some of the government's current players hidden will outweigh the organization's legal mandate to publish all formerly-secret government documents from the authoritarian governments during WWII and communism. The Parliament may debate a new UPN Chairman nomination in October. In the final words of one UPN official, "We need to do as much as we can as soon as we can."

YOUTH ORGANIZATION HOUSES INTERNET SEX COMPANY

18. (SBU) In what is perhaps a sign of the economic times, the Slovak youth agencies' building in downtown Bratislava is rumored to be renting space to an internet sex company. The building, whose lobby is still decorated with a communist-era "Young Pioneers" mural, houses youth-related NGOs and clubs like the Youth Council of Slovakia and Slovak Scouting. A steering committee of Slovak youth agencies still maintains control of the building and has approval rights over new tenants -- it is unknown whether they were aware of the true intentions of the new business tenant. With rents in Bratislava skyrocketing over the past few years, some non-profit workers fear their well-meaning organizations will be pushed into the far suburbs.

THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S SUMMER SCHEDULE

19. (U)

Jul 18: State Secretaries (Deputy Ministers) announced, Smer to have 13, SNS 7, HZDS 6

Estimated Jul 25/26: Presentation of government program to Parliament for approval

Estimated Aug 4 - late Aug: VACATION

Estimated late Aug/early Sep: Regular parliamentary session begins
VALLEE